
**Abraham Lincoln,
THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS**

19 November 1863

After a three-day battle against the Union army at Gettysburg, Robert E. Lee's Confederate Army retreated on July 4th 1863. The battle was not only a major turning point in favor of the Union Army but was also the largest and most devastating of the war, with total casualties numbering over 50,000. Four and a half months later, the process of reburying the thousands of bodies that had been shallowly interred on the battlefield had begun but was not yet complete. In this sobering setting, Lincoln delivered a brief address to an audience of about 15,000 people, who interrupted him five times to applaud. Newspapers across the North also responded very favorably. Lincoln's comments that day, however, comprised only a brief moment in the cemetery's dedication. Prior to Lincoln's three-minute speech came music, a prayer, and the featured oration, a two-hour discourse delivered by Edward Everett, retired Massachusetts politician and former president of Harvard. While Everett's speech dwelled on the details of the battle, Lincoln attempted to give meaning to the events at Gettysburg, indeed to the Civil War itself, by speaking about the ideals for which he believed the Union stood. —D. Voelker

Bibliography: Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg* (New York: Touchstone, 1992).

[1] FOURSCORE and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

[2] Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

[3] But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

SOURCE: *The Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. IX, Ed. John G. Nicolay and John Hay (New York: Tany-Thomas Co., 1905), 209–210. Paragraph numbers have been added.



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